



PARTNERSHIP

COUNCIL OF EUROPE & EUROPEAN COMMISSION

YOUTH RESEARCH

Tenth Meeting of Experts on Youth Research and Information

19-20th July 2004 Strasbourg

Report

Introduction

To understand the research partnership and the reasons why certain themes are chosen it is important to understand the political processes which surround them. The key to the political process is the European Commission White paper on YOUTH that involved all actors in the youth field in its creation. The White Paper that was 2002 took two year to prepare through consultations with diverse actors, in the Youth field Across European Union Countries. Young people, Youth organisations and policy makers were the key actors in formulating the White paper. Youth researcher played an active but smaller role in this process. The White Paper consists of different content related chapters; such as better understanding of youth, anti-racism, participation and voluntary activities. Since 2002 the chapters have been followed up using predominantly two tools the Open method of coordination (OMC) or mainstreaming of youth. The OMC has been used for the topics of Participation, Information, Voluntary Activities and Better understanding of Youth. Topics such as Anti Racism have been tackled through main streaming in work of other directorate generals.

The Council of Europe has had a long history of working with research and researchers and bringing together the latest information from research across Europe. The Council of Europe has promoted and facilitated evidenced based youth policy working with countries using tools such as national and international reviews. However, before the research partnership with the European Commission, which began in April 2003, these activities had been reduced to a minimum and research such as the supporting of the European Research network had stopped. The chapter in the White Paper on a better understanding of youth provided the initial framework for the partnership on research and the recent use of the Open Method of Coordination on this topic has provide the chance to create European Common objectives on this topic. The new YOUTH Programme 'Youth in Action' outlines support for the creation of knowledge on Youth through networking, structured dialogue, funding for filling research gaps and dissemination of results. The political framework gives a strong mandate and relevance to the work of the research partnership.

The research partnership follows the process of the implementation of the White Paper on youth and this respect the topics for the seminar (Participation and Voluntary activities) and for the European knowledge centre (Participation, Information, Voluntary activities and Better understanding of Youth) are those areas which were chapters of the White Paper and where the Open Method of Coordination has been used. The research seminar on non-formal learning is likely to be a topic for the open method of coordination in the next years.

The Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission will increase with the development of a new joint covenant containing the distinct elements of training, research and Euromed.

The members of the European research network were concerned about the narrow and limited focus for the content of the research partnership. There was a concern that other topics which are equally important were not being addressed. In the future there will be new topics covered using the Open Method of Coordination and at this point there is room to increase the diversity of topics. Topics may also be able to be addressed by the Council of Europe separately.

The research seminars remain within the scope of the CoE as they follow similar topics of interest and most importantly bring the wider diversity of participants bringing people from countries such as Russia, Albania to sit and discuss along with European Union countries. A fear was expressed from non-EU countries about their continued participation and involvement in the research partnership activities. There continued involvement was assured. The Council of Europe and the research partnership are committed to maintaining the involvement of the wider Europe and not creating a new divide. The European Commission Youth Unit works in the Youth Programme with all its new neighbours and remaining neighbours.

Seminars

The meetings of the network are a formal structure with a reporting system to the CDEJ. In the second year of the research partnership there were three seminars on the topics of Political Participation, Non-formal learning and Voluntary Activities.

What About Youth Political Participation?

24-26 November 2003, Strasbourg. This seminar explored young people's involvement in political and democratic life on a national and European level and the implications of these trends. As a group, young people were seen to be declining in their interest in traditional forms of politics and political parties, as can be seen from declining levels of voting and membership in youth sections of political parties and youth organisations as a whole. This trend towards decline in traditional participation is similar to that of the rest of the population.

The results of the seminar suggested that the reduction in traditional political participation did not indicate that young people as a whole were less interested in politics. There are some young people who reflect the notion of apathy and who are disengaged from their community and who do not invoke their rights and responsibilities as citizens. The youth policies on young people's political participation should be directed towards this work. However, some young people are actively interested in political participation and this interest can be seen from the research to be increasing. The necessary step for understanding how young people politically participate is to change the definition of political participation to encompass new forms of political engagement. The definition of political participation needs to be enlarged to encapsulate the latest developments, interests, expressions and identities of the group being studied.

Although young people now can be understood to be much more individualistic and consumer-orientated, having been born into a globalised, risk society filled with individual choice and competition to succeed, there appears to be little correlation between this and political apathy in the wider sense of politics. When young people do participate, these elements often form the basis for their political involvement. The personal and private sphere of people's everyday lives are where political interest is high and when young people discuss 'politics' in their own terms, then there is evidence of much higher levels of political interest and activity. When young people are participating politically it can relate to what clothes they wear or what food they purchase.

Practical suggestions were made from the research towards the implementation of the European Commission common objectives on Participation and toward both institutions educational practice.

The Youth Sector and Non-formal Education/Learning: working to make lifelong learning a reality and contributing to the Third Sector

This research seminar explored the role of non-formal education/learning in the youth sector in relationship to the Third Sector and European-level lifelong learning policy in particular it launched the joint text between the EC and CoE on pathways to validation. The joint text formulated the shared position between the CoE Directorate of Youth and Sport and the European Commission Youth Unit on education, training and learning in the youth field. It demonstrated what recognition means in this context and what the steps are to gaining recognition are for the individual, for civil society, for employment and formal education. The seminar placed the discussion on these topics in the youth sector within the wider debates on Life Long Learning and looking at the links between this sector and vocational education and training and adult learning. It examined the role and contribution of the youth sector's educational work with respect to supporting and encouraging participation and active citizenship, social inclusion and the employability of young people. It considered how to make NFL visible and then how to validate the skills and competencies gained. Recommendations were that the first step to validation would be to create an occupational profile for youth workers and that the European Portfolio for Youth worker could be become part of the Europass.

The seminar was held on a the Young researchers virtual community that enabled many more people to participate.

<http://cedefop.communityzero.com/youth>

How does the voluntary engagement of young people enhance their active citizenship and solidarity?

5-7th May Budapest 2004. Young people who participate on a voluntary basis provide a service that benefits the individual volunteer and society alike. The individual volunteer benefits from a feeling of belonging and contributing to society and learns skills and competencies that are beneficial to life and labour market opportunities. The society benefits from the volunteer who acts as a responsible citizen helping others in their community and becomes part of the system for renewal of civil society as a whole. On a European level, this argument is then widened to the needs of a European civil society, developing a sense of European citizenship and creating the European knowledge-based society. This seminar will take the opportunity to critically reflect on this common sense of belief concerning volunteering using the evidence from research to develop a more precise understanding of the links between volunteering and national and European citizenship, social inclusion and the development of the 'knowledge society'. The seminar examined the evidence of access to volunteering, exploring barriers to participation and evaluated the quality and impact of the experiences from a voluntary activity. The recommendations from the seminar are appendix 3 to this document.

CoE International reviews and Policy advise missions

The Directorate of Youth and sport CoE has been engaged in international policy reviews and advise missions since 1997. 10 reports have been completed so far: Finland, Netherlands, Spain Norway, Sweden Romania, Estonia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Malta, Norway and the next reports are the Cyprus and Slovakia and in 2005 Hungary and Armenia. The reports have moved on from covering the areas of concern of the experts to gradually becoming more comparable and focusing on the same policy areas which have been highlighted from Howard Williamson Synthesis report and the CoE indicators report. The process of creating these reports is highly sensitive and requires a high degree of diplomacy.

International youth policy reviews have the following objectives:

- to improve good governance in the youth field of the particular country reviewed by creating a dialogue and better co-operation between the government, civil society organisations and research
- to contribute to the body of youth policy knowledge and development of the Council of Europe
- to make contributions to greater unity of Europe in the youth field and set standards for public policies in the field of youth.

Next to these International review process there are advice missions. These are made on request, governments on youth policy planning. The last completed report was made on the Czech Republic (December 2003) , 2004 “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in 2005 the UN administered region of the Kosovo, Bosnia&Herzegovina and Armenia.

Youth policy advisory missions have more country specific objectives. They are expected to:

- provide competent advice to a member country on a particular strand of their youth policy or an intended revision of their global youth policy
- identify follow-up activities to implement recommendations with a particular reference to the Council of Europe’s possibilities to contribute

It was discussed that now could be the time for another synthesis report to be completed on the national review process.

European Common Objectives on a Better Understanding of youth

The European Commission, Youth Unit has been implementing youth policy this year through the Open Method of Coordination and the creation of Common Objectives on youth. The four areas in which this political process has been implemented are on the topics of a Better Understanding of Youth, Voluntary Activities, Participation and Information. The creation of European Common Objectives on a Better Understanding and Knowledge of Youth is a key development for the Youth Research Partnership and for the wider youth research community. These objectives will be implemented by EU member states upon adoption in November 2005 under the Dutch Presidency. The objective for a Better Understanding of Youth covers four areas. The first objective consists in identifying and giving user friendly access to existing knowledge in the four priorities of participation, information, voluntary activities and a Better Understanding of Youth. The second is to identify existing knowledge in further priority areas of interest to the youth field and implement measures to supplement, update and facilitate access to it. The third objective is to ensure quality, comparability and relevance of knowledge in the youth field by using appropriate methods and tools. The fourth area is to facilitate and promote exchange and dialogue. The aims for these networks are to facilitate the creation of a Better Understanding of Youth across the youth field. The people involved in the networks would be youth researchers and other youth actors such as policy makers, NGOs, Youth workers and young people.

The emphasis was placed on the cooperation with the CoE in implementing these objectives particularly within the Research partnership. The question for the research network was how can they be actively involved?

European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy

The need for a system that disseminates research data on youth in a user-friendly, reliable and systematic manner for policy making was highlighted as a recommendation within the CoE publication (2000) *The European Mosaic* by Chisholm and Kovacheva and more recently (2004) by the member states of the EU in their responses to the questionnaires from the Open Method of Coordination on the topic of a Better Understanding of Youth. The core content of this project will begin with the priority areas of participation, voluntary activities, Information and Better Understanding of youth. The setting of common objectives has become the driving force for the project and in the future different themes can be added.

The reason that the old database from the Council of Europe was discontinued was that it was exclusive and specific for researchers and for this reason it was heavily criticised. It was a self service system and had no public. The new system will be created so the information is directly useful to policy makers and those who contribute to policy making. It will be useful also for many of the diverse actors in the youth field such as National Agencies, NGOs and trainers. It will serve as key tool for transferring research knowledge into policy and practice. It was requested by the members of the network that the history of the knowledge management of data on youth in the CoE was added in the Knowledge Centre.

2005 Will be the pilot year for the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. In January the European Knowledge Centre correspondents will be trained and will be contracted to input the data between February and July 2005. The pilot project is open to the public on the 30th April. The correspondents will be contracted and paid 2000 euros for their work in 2005. The results of the pilot phase will give a much clearer indication of the amount and details of the work to be completed by correspondents. In the pilot year it will be important to gain as much feedback as possible from stakeholders in order that the second phase of the project can make the necessary changes to make the European knowledge centre as user-friendly and tailored to the users needs as possible. It is recognised that in the pilot phase there will be some difficulties as there are many issues that the creating of a European Knowledge centre raises.

The development of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy will play a central role in supporting the collation and access to research data on the four priorities of the Common Objectives. In the first phase the European Knowledge Centre correspondents will be asked to answer questions prepared by the European Commission on these areas and to give a more general country profile. The responses will then be available for policy makers by questions, by countries and over time. There will also the possibility to search for all texts in the knowledge centre for relevant information.

The scope of the Knowledge Centre Project is that it is a single entry point for research based information on priority topics. The EKCYP is a specialized portal for policy makers and those who contribute to youth policy; it is not a generalist tool for young

people. The existing papers and policy text such as national reviews will be utilized in the Knowledge Centre and new information will be entered by Knowledge Centre correspondents yearly. Further features of the Knowledge Centre will be an ABC of Youth Policy, news, glossary of terms, examples of good practice on participation, expert database, online applications for seminars and general portal features.

The quality and reliability of the knowledge that is entered by Knowledge Centre correspondents will have to be assured in the further development of the Knowledge Centre. One possibility is that a small group made up from 4 or 5 persons from the network who have a good knowledge of research and policy in the key priorities across Europe can be used to assist in the validation of data. This is further discussed below in the report from the working group.

Communication with key actors was recommended to be increased in particular with the ministries to help the European network correspondents have a dialogue with the ministries on this issue.

Questions of clarification

What are the roles of the different correspondents?

- European Knowledge Centre Correspondent

The role of the European Knowledge centre correspondent is to be trained how to use the knowledge centre. S/he will then be responsible for answering the questions set directly into the knowledge centre through accessing the centre via the internet. S/he will be responsible with support for finding the relevant answers to questions.

- European Network Correspondent

The role of the European Network correspondent is to assist the European Knowledge centre correspondent by gathering information from national youth networks to help with the answering of the questions. Their main task is to support the creation and development of national networks and to be the link to the European level. In this respect the calls for papers in from the research seminar are currently unevenly distributed by network correspondents across Europe and the developments of these networks will assist in a wider dissemination of calls for interest and seminar results.

A small number of the Network Correspondents could be involved in the validation group of the data for the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.

Will the Knowledge centre software be user friendly?

In order to ensure that the system is user friendly in the pilot development a number of users will be involved. At the end of the pilot phase stakeholders will be asked for feedback on the knowledge centre both through the centre and in an evaluation meeting in order to decide what changes are needed for the second phase of developments. Both

these processes have been set up to ensure that the system will fit the demands of the user.

What language will the knowledge centre be in?

All questions and answers by correspondents will be in English. This is a specialist tool for policy makers and not for anybody. In the long run it may be possible to add policy texts in other languages.

Who will decide on the good practices?

In the first step, the good practices will be collected on participation. This is linked to the CoE charter on participation and will be validated by Micheal Ingledow. It will be possible that anyone accessing the knowledge centre can enter an example of good practice on participation.

Is there a system of virus protection?

Yes a comprehensive virus protection package has been purchased with the European Knowledge Centre for youth policy.

Who will be the experts in the Expert database?

The Experts in the database will be the European Knowledge Centre correspondents, The European network Correspondents and those people who have been selected for research seminars. These people will be able to enter in a CV. The expert database is primarily for those people who are working on the priority topics.

Will virtual communities replace face-to-face meetings?

No the use of the virtual communitis can only supplement meetings as working tools – they will never replace them as communities do not function without the face-to-face meetings in between.

Is the system accessible for everybody?

Anybody with internet access and a computer system can access the European Knowledge centre for youth policy. The Knowledge Centre correspondents have access to the questions and the possibility to write answers into the knowledge centre.

What happens to countries that have not applied or who are not accepted in the first year?

They will be able to join the project in 2006. The ministries will again be asked to nominate a correspondent, the Research Partnership undertakes to train them and they will be responsible for feeding the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.

Working group report on Quality Assurance of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy

The data from the Knowledge Centre must be reliable. Policymakers will not go back if information is inaccurate and or out of date. There was an agreement that a process needed to be found to validate the data.

- How could validation happen?

One solution would be that an international group of people (i.e. 3 or 4) possibly from the research network could play a central role in the validation of data. The group should not be larger than five people in order to be efficient. This group should not be made up solely of researchers and there would need to be a clear mandate of the role of the group. The members of this group should be volunteers so as not to be biased in this process. This group should be trained in the use of the Knowledge Centre and the validation process.

The quality criteria should be clear and accurate to avoid problems later on. During the pilot phase this criteria should be created.

The data sources should be clearly identified so that this checking process would be made possible. Random checking was seen as more possible than checking of each piece of information.

There is an ethical consideration to be considered. Those involved in the process do not want to seem as if they are checking on the person and their working methods.

Verification could be given by ministries although this was recognised as difficult as then the ministries would need to be trained in validation process and could delay access to data.

When considering what data is up to date the first idea was that information should not be older than two to three years. It was considered that this may not be possible so we might have to more flexible on the timeliness of data. One proposal was not more than 2 years since publications of results rather than collection of data.

International Review

Suggestions:

- The Knowledge centre correspondent should be part or an observer of the national and international review team in order that they gain access to the latest results.
- A summary could be useful information for policy makers. This summary would be directly entered by the international review team into the Knowledge Centre.

- A checklist could also be placed within the Knowledge Centre for the international review teams to answer. The check list would be based on using the questions from the indicators report.

The development of national and European networks

Hans Joachim Schild presented from the common objectives on a Better Understanding of Youth the concept of creating a knowledge base on youth developed from networks that contain all the actors in the Youth field. This means that the network that need to be developed on a national and European level need to go beyond the field of researchers to include the divers actors of the youth field: policy makers, youth workers, Youth NGOs, national agencies and young people. The responsibility for the development of the National networks are the ministries.

The coordination at a European level should take place with the EC and its partners. In this case the partners are the Council of Europe and in particular this refers to the research partnership. Future tools and methods need to be identified for this. The knowledge developed at a national level should be linked to the feeding of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. In this respect the Research network correspondents should work closely with the Knowledge Centre correspondents. The network correspondent could play a key role in the development of these national networks helping to collect the knowledge on youth together. The Knowledge centre correspondent can work with this knowledge to feed the European knowledge centre for youth policy. We should consider how to give some stability to the European network as it is difficult to manage with a changing group each year.

Frank Marx from DG research presented the funding possibilities from the 6th Framework for research networks.

Working group report ‘Developing networks at a European and National level’

The Development of Youth Networks at a European and National level:

The objective of the networking in the youth field is to develop a better knowledge and understanding of youth affairs based on the needs expressed by member states within the OMC and Objective setting processes. The networks are the arenas to facilitate exchange and dialogue. This exchange and dialogue should be developed and be connected at all levels: European, National, regional and local. The questions which arise

- How the European level should function?
- How the national level should function?
- How the link should be established between these two levels?

There should be awareness that there are different forms of knowledge developed in the youth field and the different manners in which they are managed. For example, ‘should the network correspondents provide brief papers on a national level?’

The networks imagined within the common objectives refer to the bringing together of all actors in the youth field. In the youth field this is commonly referred to as the triangle between youth research, youth Policy and youth work. The first step in this process is the mapping of existing networks: are they bottom up? Are they fluid? Do they fit the models of double spiders, Chinese boxes etc. This process should also demonstrate where the overlaps of interest are in the youth sector.

What is to be considered is that there is a clear balance between aims and means of these networks.

The different actors in the youth field create very different forms of knowledge and manage them in very distinct ways. There is no clear hierarchy between these forms of knowledge and nor should there be. Therefore in or to develop a dialogue then a structure needs to be imagined and developed. This is what is known as a 'structured dialogue'.